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Central Intelligence Bulletin

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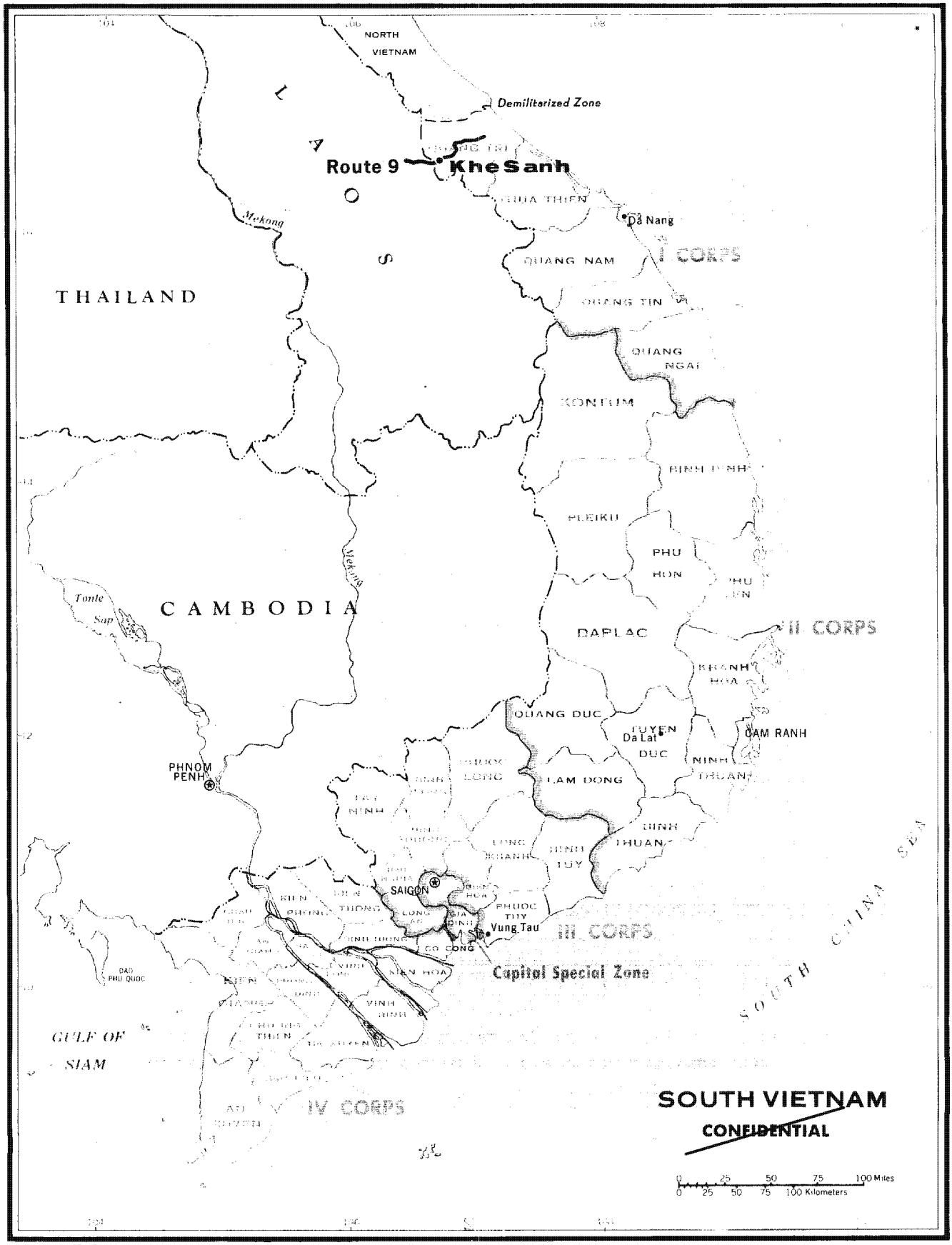

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25 Jan 68 CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN Map

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*Vietnam:

South Vietnam: North Vietnamese units continue active in the Khe Sanh area.

Although no major fighting was reported on 24 January, US Marine patrols discovered breaks in the barbed-wire barrier surrounding the main strong-point. The patrols also report extensive enemy movement east and along Route 9 west of Khe Sanh.

The Marine defenses are under pressure from sporadic enemy shelling. The main base at Khe Sanh came under artillery attack for almost five hours on the 24th.

North Vietnam: Hanoi now seems unwilling to elaborate publicly its present policy toward talks on the war. 3.3(h)(2)

In contrast to efforts made prior to President Johnson's State of the Union address to underscore the reasonableness of the Communist position, Hanoi now seems bent on preventing exaggerated interpretations of its intentions. The North Vietnamese have since concentrated on denouncing the President's restatement of the San Antonio formula and have in general returned to a hard-line treatment of the war, playing down their recent "will" talk offer.

In addition, the North Vietnamese spokesman in Paris, Mai Van Bo, who last week seemed eager for press contacts that would allow him to play up the positive aspects of Hanoi's position, on 22 January canceled a scheduled interview with the excuse that he had "said everything he had to say up to now."

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A Western press source reports that Soviet Premier Kosygin may go to Hanoi after his current visit to New Delhi. The story is not confirmed, but such a visit is possible and could coincide with a Tet bombing pause. The last high-level Soviet visit to North Vietnam was in January 1966 when politburo member Shelepin led a delegation to North Vietnam during the 37-day bombing pause. [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] 3.5(c)

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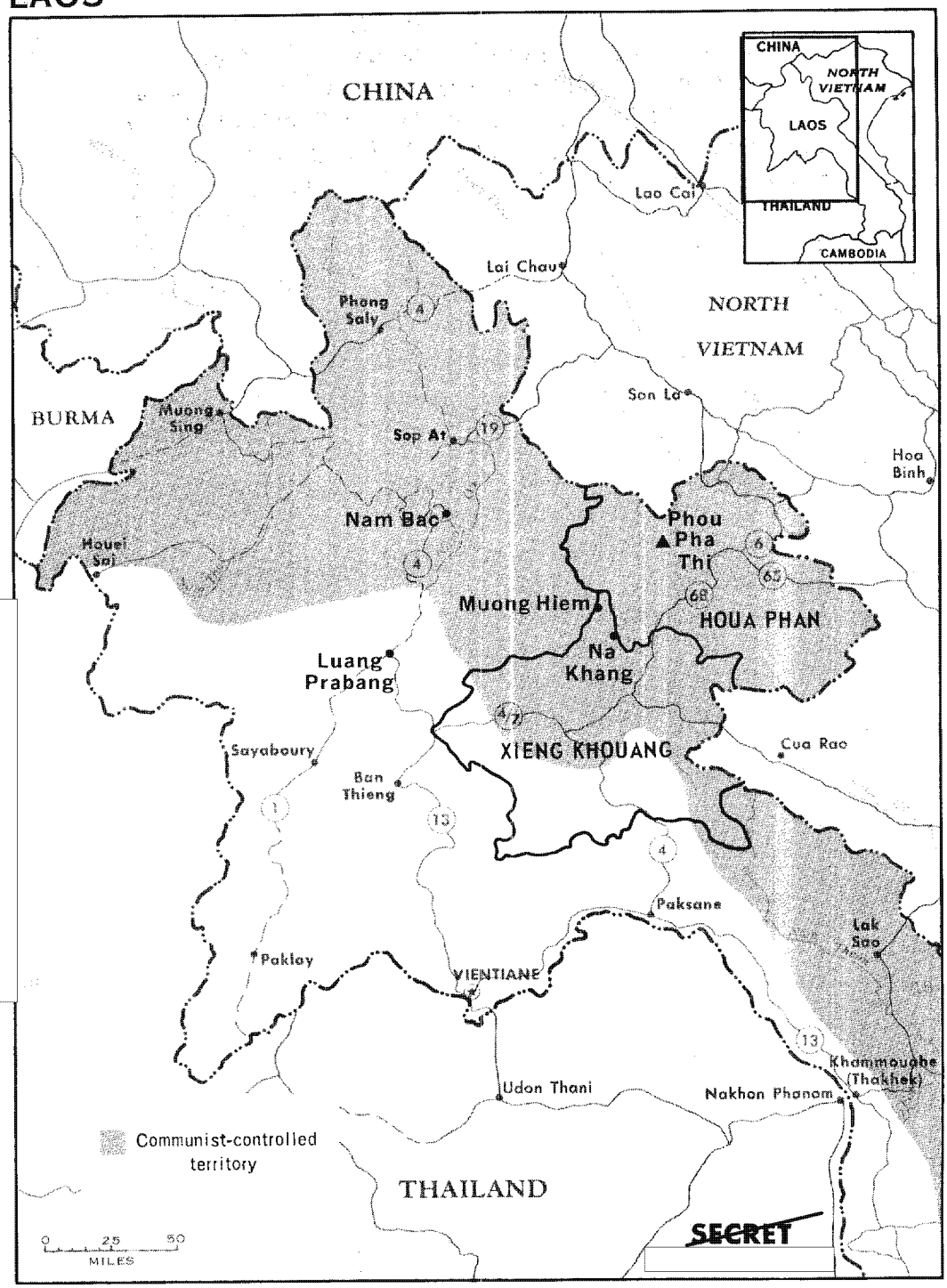
LAOS



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Laos: [The Nam Bac defeat now appears to be one of the most costly setbacks the Laotian Government has suffered in several years.]

[Although it will be some time before the exact number of government casualties can be fixed, losses probably will be considerable. Over a week has passed since the Nam Bac defensive perimeter collapsed, but the government can account for less than half of the 3,500-man force deployed there. The government also lost large stocks of heavy weapons, ammunition, and other equipment.]

[Communist forces are harassing the troops withdrawing from the Nam Bac area and have prevented the government from establishing a new defensive line south of the base. There is no indication, however, that the Communists intend to follow up their success with a drive into government-held areas. Communist activity near the royal capital of Luang Prabang appears to be an attempt to tie down a substantial number of government troops.]

[The Communists are also stepping up their annual dry season campaign against government guerrilla bases in northeastern Laos. The enemy has recently taken a number of outlying posts near Phou Pha Thi, possibly in preparation for artillery attacks on the airstrip. Loss of this base, which was unsuccessfully attacked by North Vietnamese aircraft on 12 January, would seriously disrupt government operations in northern Houa Phan Province. This would also deprive the US of navigational aids for air operations over North Vietnam.]

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In addition, the Communists captured the government position at Muong Hiem on 23 January, suggesting that an early thrust may be made against Na Khang, the principal base for friendly guerrilla operations in northern Xieng Khouang Province. [redacted] 3.5(c)

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